

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 PM-03 L-01 INR-05
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FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6140
INFO USMISSION USBERLIN
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BONN 03899

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PGOV, WB, GW, UK, US, FR
SUBJECT: RUDOLF HESS

REFS: (A) USBER 621; (B) BONN 3545; (C) BONN 1212;
(D) STATE 301274 (76); (E) BONN 1926;
(F) BONN 2037; (NOTAL)

BEGIN SUMMARY: FRG HAS RAISED THE HESS SITUATION IN
THE BONN GROUP EXPRESSING ITS CONCERN OVER PUBLIC
AND POLITICAL IMPACT IN FRG OF HIS CONTINUED IMPRISON-
MENT. WHILE SHARING FRG CONCERN, ALLIED REPS FEEL FRG
IS OVERSTATING THE PROBLEM. NEVERTHELESS, ALLIED REPS
HAVE AGREED ON A PRESS LINE SETTING FORTH ALLIED
POSITION IN THE MATTER. ALLIED REPS HAVE ALSO AGREED
THAT HESS JUNIOR TELEGRAM TO CHIEFS OF STATE SHOULD BE
ANSWERED BY EMBASSIES IN BONN AFTER COORDINATION IN
BONN GROUP RATHER THAN FROM CAPITALS. ACTION
REQUESTED: APPROVAL OF PRESS LINE AND OF PROPOSAL FOR
REPLY TO HESS TELEGRAM BY EMBASSY. END SUMMARY.

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1. AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE MARCH 1 BONN GROUP
MEETING, FRG REP (HENZE) TOOK THE UNUSUAL STEP OF
RAISING THE SUBJECT OF THE HESS IMPRISONMENT. HENZE
SAID THAT THE FOREIGN OFFICE FOUND ITSELF UNDER MORE
AND MORE PRESSURE CONCERNING HESS. HE MENTIONED
SPECIFICALLY THE NUMBER OF LETTERS AND CALLS FROM
BUNDESTAG MEMBERS TO GENSCHER AND SAID THAT HE COULD

NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SITUATION WILL BE DISCUSSED IN THE BUNDESTAG. THE FACT THAT HE IS STILL IN PRISON DOES NOT MEET WITH MUCH UNDERSTANDING IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC AS WELL AS ELSEWHERE.

2. AT THIS POINT, FRENCH REP (DE BOISSIEU) ASKED WHAT THE FRG EXPECTED THE ALLIES TO DO.

3. HENZE SAID THE FRG WAS OPEN TO SUGGESTIONS ON THE SUBJECT. THE BIGGEST IMMEDIATE PROBLEM FOR THE FRG WAS THE ALLEGATION THAT THE ALLIES COULD ACT WITHOUT SOVIET CONSENT AND FREE HESS IF THEY REALLY WANTED TO DO SO.

4. DE BOISSIEU REPLIED THAT THE CLAIM WAS INCORRECT. THERE WAS NO "SECRET AGREEMENT" OR REGULATION AS FORMER SPANDAU COMMANDANT BIRD HAS SUGGESTED WHICH WOULD ALLOW HESS TO BE FREED WITHOUT SOVIET CONSENT, AN ASSERTION REPEATED BY HESS' SON AT HIS RECENT PRESS CONFERENCE IN BERLIN (REF A).

5. HENZE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT FACT BUT THE CLAIM IS STILL BEING MADE BEFORE THE GERMAN PUBLIC. PERHAPS THE ALLIES SHOULD PUBLICLY REAFFIRM THEIR POSITION AND REFUTE THE ALLEGATION. AS FOR OTHER POSSIBLE ACTION, HENZE SAID HE COULD NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF GENSCHER'S WRITING TO THE THREE FOREIGN MINISTERS ASKING FOR THE ALLIES AGAIN TO APPROACH THE SOVIETS CONCERNING HESS' RELEASE.
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6. HENZE ALSO ASKED WHETHER THERE IS ANY EMERGENCY PLANNING IN CASE HESS DIES. WHAT HAPPENS TO SPANDAU? HE RECALLED THAT THE SOVIETS WANTED TO MAKE IT A MEMORIAL.

7. UK REP (HITCH) REPLIED COMMENTING THAT A PUBLIC STANCE BY THE ALLIES OF COURSE WAS POSSIBLE AND MIGHT CALM THE SITUATION IN THE BUNDESTAG BUT THAT HE DOUBTED IT WOULD DO HESS MUCH GOOD, INDEED THE CONTRARY. IN REGARD TO THE PRISON IN THE EVENT OF HESS' DEATH, IT WOULD BE RETURNED TO THE BRITISH. HITCH OBSERVED THAT THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT THE RUSSIANS CAN DO BEFORE AND AFTER HESS' DEATH. BEFORE HIS DEATH, THEY CAN MAKE HIM MISERABLE. AFTER HIS DEATH, THE PRISON IS IN THE BRITISH SECTOR AND POSSESSION IS NINE-TENTHS OF THE LAW.

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6141
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 BONN 03899

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8. ON MARCH 2, ALLIED BONN GROUP REPS DISCUSSED THE SITUATION TRIPARTITELY FOCUSING ON TWO ELEMENTS: FIRST, HOW TO RESPOND TO THE TELEGRAMS FROM WOLF RUEDIGER HESS TO THE ALLIED CHIEFS OF STATE (REF B), AND, SECOND, HOW TO EVALUATE THE PROBLEM IN THE LIGHT OF HENZE'S REMARKS.

9. ON THE FIRST POINT, THERE WAS A CONSENSUS THAT THE REPLIES TO THE TELEGRAMS FROM HESS JUNIOR SHOULD BE COORDINATED (THE UK REP PARTICULARLY URGED THAT THIS BE DONE). IT WAS FURTHER AGREED TO RECOMMEND TO CAPITALS THAT THE REPLIES COME FROM ALLIED EMBASSIES IN BONN AND THAT, THEREFORE, ACTION IN PREPARING THE REPLIES BE TRANSFERRED TO BONN AND COORDINATED IN THE BONN GROUP.

10. ON HENZE'S REMARKS, ALLIED REPS DISCUSSED AND THEN REJECTED THE IDEA OF ISSUING A PRESS STATEMENT ON THE ALLIED POSITION ON THE GROUNDS THAT THERE IS LITTLE TO GAIN IN ENTERING INTO A PUBLIC DEBATE WITH HESS' SON ON THE SUBJECT. IN ADDITION, WE ARE MINDFUL OF THE FACT THAT THE ALLIED PROPOSAL ON THE DISPOSITION OF
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HESS' REMAINS (REFS C, D, AND E) IS ON THE TABLE. A FORMAL ALLIED STATEMENT WOULD PROBABLY END ANY HOPE WE MIGHT HAVE, HOWEVER SLIM, THAT THE SOVIETS MIGHT AGREE TO THE ALLIED PROPOSAL.

11. HOWEVER, WE DID AGREE TRIPARTITELY THAT, AS HENZE SUGGESTED, IT MIGHT BE WORTHWHILE TO RESTATE THE ALLIED POSITION IN SOME MANNER, PREFERABLY IN RESPONSE TO PRESS INQUIRIES OR PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS (SELF-GENERATED, IF NECESSARY). THEREFORE, IT WAS AGREED FURTHER TO RESPOND WITH THE FOLLOWING POINTS:

- THERE IS NO SECRET AGREEMENT OR PRISON REGULATION WHICH WOULD ALLOW THE THREE ALLIES TO FREE HESS WITHOUT SOVIET CONCURRENCE IF THEY WISHED TO DO SO.
- THE ALLIES HAVE APPROACHED THE SOVIETS ON A NUMBER OF OCCASIONS (IN 1964, 1966, 1969, 1970, 1975, AND 1976 SPECIFICALLY) REQUESTING THAT HESS BE FREED, AND ON EACH OCCASION THE SOVIETS HAVE REFUSED.

12. COMMENT: WE THINK THAT HENZE'S PRESENTATION OF THE SITUATION IS SOMEWHAT OVERDRAWN. IN PARTICULAR, WE DO NOT PERCEIVE THE WAVE OF PRESSURE IN THE FRG TO WHICH HENZE REFERRED. TO THE CONTRARY, ALTHOUGH THERE IS A RECOGNITION OF THE HUMAN TRAGEDY IN THE AFFAIR, THERE IS ALSO, IT SEEMS TO US, A RECOGNITION OF THE FACTS THAT THE ALLIES HAVE TRIED TO OBTAIN HESS' RELEASE, THE SOVIETS ARE THE STUMBLING BLOCK, AND ALLIED ACTION WITHOUT SOVIET CONCURRENCE WOULD BE AN UNDERMINING OF THE FOUR POWER STATUS OF BERLIN, AN UNDERMINING WHICH IS CERTAINLY NOT IN WESTERN INTEREST PARTICULARLY IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT GDR ACTIONS IN EAST BERLIN. WHAT LITTLE EDITORIAL COMMENT THERE
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HAS BEEN IN THE FRG PRESS FOLLOWING THE SUICIDE ATTEMPT BEARS OUT THESE OBSERVATIONS AND PUTS THE BLAME SQUARELY ON THE SOVIETS.

13. ON THE OTHER HAND, IT IS CLEAR THAT RESPONSIBLE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 03 BONN 03899

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CIRCLES WITHIN FRG POLITICAL LEADERSHIP ARE NOW TAKING UP THE CAUSE. IN THAT REGARD, WE WOULD NOTE CDU LEADER KOHL'S REMARK TO THE AMBASSADOR (REF F) AND THE LETTER WHICH THE AMBASSADOR HAS RECEIVED FROM BUNDESTAG PRESIDENT CARSTENS REQUESTING THAT HESS BE ALLOWED TO GO TO A GERMAN HOSPITAL FOR CARE. FINALLY, FRG BONN GROUP REP VON ARNIM WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR RESPONDING TO "HESS LETTERS" TO THE FOREIGN OFFICE SAID ON THE MARGIN OF TUESDAY'S MEETING THAT HIS CLIENTEL HAS CHANGED IN RECENT YEARS FROM THE PREDICTABLE UNRECONSTRUCTED TO A BROADER BASE INCLUDING A BROAD SPECTRUM OF BUNDESTAG MEMBERS. WE CONSIDERED THAT FACT WHEN WE CONCLUDED THAT SOME LIMITED ALLIED STATEMENT IN RESPONSE TO PRESS INQUIRIES WOULD BE USEFUL. END COMMENT.

14. ACTION REQUESTED: EMBASSY REQUESTS THAT:

-- DEPARTMENT AGREE THAT HESS JUNIOR'S TELEGRAM TO THE PRESIDENT SHOULD BE ANSWERED BY THE EMBASSY RATHER THAN FROM WASHINGTON, PARA 9 ABOVE AND

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-- USG SPOKESMEN TAKE LINE IN PARA 11 ABOVE IN RESPONDING TO PRESS INQUIRIES.

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Message Attributes

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